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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Wednesday - June 25, 1941

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FLIES--PUBLIC NUISANCE NO. 1". Information from Farm Security Officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The house fly is a nuisance and a health menace. Nobody likes flies and nobody wants them around.....Today Farm Security officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture report some of the ways its borrower families are trying to control flies.

What probably comes first to your mind in control of flies is screens. Every home should be screened. The trouble or expense of screening is nothing compared to its comfort and health protection. Screens should be tight-fitting and kept in good repair. The best you can afford are none too good because they last longer and stay in better condition. In moist climates, copper or bronze screens, or other rust-resistant types are best, but in dry climates galvanized or painted screens are satisfactory. Fourteen-mesh will keep out flies but 16-mesh will keep out other insects as well.

You've noticed how flies are always worse at the kitchen door than anywhere else, haven't you? That's because food odors attract them. Some people take advantage of this fact and make a little screened-in porch or vestibule. They put the vestibule door at one side instead of in front, opposite the kitchen door, so a lot of the flies will light on the outside screen and miss the entrance door entirely. All screen doors should open outward.

Then "swat the fly." Swatting may seem pretty discouraging when there are so many flies, but just remember that one fly now may mean a million later on. Fly swatters cost very little to buy, but some people make their own. They take small scraps of screen wire, bind them with cloth, and tack them to handles such as sticks.

in the shade during midday. Also keep the bait pans well filled. Better check them about every other day, and wash them often. Empty the fly traps about once a week if you have a lot of flies. You don't catch as many when they get piled high against the side of the cone. Never feed trapped flies - dead or alive - to chickens.

Or you can poison flies. You can buy commercial poisons or you can make fly-poison at home. Most of these poisons are dangerous to human beings and animals as well as flies. So take great care to keep them out of reach of children and pets. An effective homemade fly poison is 3 teaspoonfuls of formalin in a pint of sweet, skimmed milk or water. Add a tablespoon of sugar or syrup if you like, and pour it over a small thin slice of bread in a saucer. This solution attracts and kills flies, and works best when no other food or crumbs are around.

Or instead of using a saucer, partly fill a drinking glass. Then line a small plate or saucer with a piece of blotting paper, and put it on top of the glass bottom up. Invert the whole thing and insert a little piece of match stick under the edge of the glass. This will keep you from having to refill the containers so often. Pull down all the window shades in the room but one, if you can. Leave this one shade up 5 or 6 inches from the sill. Set the bait right there in the light.

Some people are quite successful with fly sprays, both indoors and out. Many make their own at home. Entomologists in the U. S. Department of Agriculture suggest pyrethrum extract combined with high-grade kerosene. You can get the pyrethrum "flowers" at the drug store. Put one pound of the flowers in a gallon of kerosene, and let them soak, stirring occasionally, for about 48 hours. Then strain off the liquid through cheese cloth and apply it with a good hand spray. Outdoors, the spray must hit the flies, but indoors it is usually enough to atomize the spray into the air until you have a good floating mist. Then for best results, close the room for half an hour.

Of course, the most important thing of all in fly control is sanitation. What flies don't like, and won't put up with, is cleanliness. So if you want to help reduce the fly population, just refuse to feed and house them. Starve them out and destroy their habitations. As Farm Security officials say, "Any trouble you go to in getting rid of this health menace and 'public nuisance No. 1' is well worthwhile."

That's all the fly news for today.